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INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY: ARGENTINA (AR)

REPORT NO: [redacted] (b)(3):10 USC 424

TITLE: Military/Political - Human Rights, Beagle Affair, and the Presidency (U)

DATE OF INFO: 800516 (YY MM DD)

REPORT DATE: 800520 (YY MM DD)

ORIGINATOR: [redacted]

REQ REFERENCES: (b)(3):10 USC 424

SOURCE: AMEMB Official (b)(3):10 USC 424

SUMMARY: ~~(C)~~ This report forwards an AMEMB cable describing a meeting between the Ambassador (Raul CASTRO) and Lieutenant General (Retired) Roberto VIOLA, former Argentine Army CINC and Junta member. Topics of discussion were: Human Rights, Beagle Channel, Presidential Succession, Banking Crisis, GOA Participation in Possible Bolivian Coup, and Nuclear.

DETAILS: (U) None.

ORIGINATOR COMMENTS: (U) None.

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3 Authority: EO 13526
2 DIA FOIA & Declassification Services Offices
1 Date: *Oct 19, 2018*

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~~REVW ON: 16 May 2000~~

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1 **ENCLOSURE(S):**
1. AMEMB cable CN4089 dtg 161259Z May 80, 5 pgs, 1 cy, ~~(0)~~

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161359Z MAY 80

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ TELEGRAM

FROM: AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

CLASSIFICATION: ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

E.O. 12065: ~~XDS 4 5/16/00 (Castro, Ra61 H.) OR-M~~

TAGS: AR, SHUM , PINT, PGOV, PBOR

SUBJECT: ~~(C)~~ Human Rights, Beagle Affair, Presidency General Viola

ACTION: SecState WashDC - Immediate
Info: Amembassy Santiago - Priority

amb
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econ
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(b)(3):10 USC 424

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Intops 1396 Vida

1. ~~(C)~~ Entire Text.

2. At my request, I met last evening (May 15) with (Retired) General Roberto Viola at a Downtown Buenos Aires Office. Purpose of my meeting was to obtain General Viola's impressions of current GOA problems before my departure for CONUS tonight.

3. We met alone at 19:30 hours. He appeared quite relaxed, exuberant and in a talking mood. At this moment, Viola continues to be the leading Presidential contender. He acted as if though he had Presidential power, giving impression he was a "winner." He had a scotch, I had a coffee. Topics discussed follow:

4. Human Rights: I handed him a list of nine persons arrested and supposedly disappeared in the Rosario area on May 7. When I told him the kidnapping took place on May 7, he appeared stunned. His words were "I can't believe it. This can't be true. There's more to this than meets the eye." He immediately called

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CLEARANCES:

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OPTIONAL FORM 153
(Formerly FS-413)
January 1975
Dept. of State

his Aide, Major Torres, and instructed him to immediately get on the case and attempt to get information for me before my departure tonight. He told Major Torres to contact Colonel Pino immediately and get the facts. Major Torres stated there were no rumors in the Comando (GOA Pentagon) about any activity in Rosario. He said normally when an operation of this nature would take place, it would be known in an instant within the Comando. The nine persons supposedly sequestered are: Francisco Peña, Graciela Gonzales, Nicolas Cristofaro, "Baby" Peña, Marcelo Peña, FNU Tarquini, León [redacted] Berdychevsky, Alicia Gerosa and Fernando Mario Sanfilippe were arrested on May 11.

5. Beagle Channel Matter: I then asked Viola "What is the status of the Beagle Channel affairM." He stated there was nothing to be alarmed about. Viola stated, in his opinion, there were no manifestations or indications that Papal mediation efforts weren't moving properly. He was quite emphatic in stating no one knew of the Pope's thinking on the Beagle matter, therefore, there was no reason for "doubting Toms" to circulate unwarranted rumors. Viola expressed full confidence in the Pope's ability to come out with a Solomonic recommendation. Viola stated both countries had presented their positions, which at this moment are quite fixed for negotiation purposes. They are miles apart, but now the Pope will start narrowing

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the issues. I asked about his source of information. He replied he had talked to the Pope's envoy to Argentina, Pío Laghi. Viola explained ~~MHK~~ both countries had its share of rumor mongers, who wanted blood. He was most confident in that the Beagle Affair would be settled peacefully. I then asked him about a much talked about plebiscite taking place in Chile and Argentina. Viola stated it was a Chilean ploy to attempt to take the heat off Pinochet. Viola raised his voice and said: "Chile needs a plebiscite. I won't quarrel with that maneuver. Argentina doesn't need a plebiscite. We don't have to abdicate our decision-making role and pass the buck to the public." Viola further explained a plebiscite has great risks. It lends itself to manipulations and fraud by a government and he wanted no part of it.

6. Presidential Succession: I asked Viola about his chances in being Argentina's next president. He smiled and said "You do ask direct questions." I replied if I didn't ask a question I would never get an answer. GeneralViola told me when I met with him at an "asado," April 27, 1980, at San Antonio de Areco, he was seriously concerned about his chances. (See B.A.3486). He reminded me about his stating General Galtieri could very well be the next President. Viola, at this point, was all smiles as he told me he had been working on the troops and his chances are much better than what he had anticipated. He said if one chose ten

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points to be maximum, his reading now would be ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ eight ~~xxxx~~ to nine points. He explained at the San Antonio de Areco "asado" his chances stood at five points. Viola by now was really feeling his oats as he expressed full confidence he would be the next president. He down-graded the Navy's efforts to scuttle his chances. Viola explained Admiral Lambruschini was an honorable person and a friend. He felt in the long run he would get his support. Still in a jovial mood, Viola stated the AF is always up in the air, but they will be forced to land in an Army base.

7. Banking Crisis: Viola took the view that the recent banking crisis would have been avoided had more subtle tactics been employed. His approach was that the whole matter was now ~~xxxx~~ "fait accompli." There was no need to cry about spilt milk. Viola explained there would be continuity in the economic front for years to come. He made it clear there would be probably change of faces, with minor modifications in the approach, but the main thrust would be the same.

8. GOA Participation in Possible Bolivian Coup: General Viola disclaimed any GOA effort in possible Bolivian coup. He explained possibility of some of GOA's milgroup personnel could make unauthorized statements. Viola's view of these statements could be made to perhaps impress Bolivian military, but authenticity as to truth would be nil. Viola

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mentioned he stayed current on army activities by talking to General Galtieri, Army Commander, and General Vaquero, Chief of Staff.

9. Nuclear: Viola expressed serious concern over existing misunderstandings between CNEA and State Department over nuclear matters. He hoped these matters could be resolved soon, as they were an irritant to relations.

CASTRO RAE

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